Hittite (nom.-acc. sg. n.) *ḫa-a-li* ‘pen, corral (for cows and horses)’

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This is the fifth in a series of papers dealing with Anatolian (Hittite) etymology. As in the previous papers, I will be using the glottalic model of Proto-Indo-European consonantism (more accurately, Proto-Indo-Anatolian consonantism — for details, cf. Bomhard 2024) followed, in parentheses, by the traditional reconstruction (on which, cf. Byrd 2018).

According to Kloekhorst (2008:272—273), Hittite (nom.-acc. sg. n.) *ḫa-a-li* ‘pen, corral (for cows and horses)’ does not have any known Anatolian or non-Anatolian cognates. Kloekhorst mentions two proposed etymologies, one by Puhvel and one by Rieken, but he dismisses both as impossible. Kloekhorst also rejects any connection between *ḫa-a-li* ‘pen, corral (for cows and horses)’ and *ḫa-a-li* ‘night watch (as a time measurement)’ (cf. Friedrich 1991:47). For details, cf. Puhvel 1984— .3:26—28; Kloekhorst 2008:272—273, Rieken 1999:226; Friedrich 1991:46 and 47.

The following forms are attested: (nom.-acc. sg. n.) *ḫa-a-li* ‘pen, corral (for cows and horses)’, (gen. sg.) *ḫa-li-ya-aš*, (dat. sg.) *ḫa-a-li*, *ḫa-a-li-ya*, *ḫa-li-ya*, (abl.) *ḫa-a-li-ya-az*, *ḫa-a-li-az*, *ḫa-li-ya-az*, (instr.) *ḫa-a-li-it*; (nom.-acc. pl.) *ḫa-a-li-ya*, (dat.-loc. pl.) *ḫa-a-li-ya$_x$-aš* // [*ḫa-a-li-y*]*a-aš* // *ḫa-a-li-aš*.

Now, according to Puhvel (1984— .3:27) “Hitt. *hali-,* on the other hand, signifies an enclosure, with emphasis on confinement rather than openness; …” On this basis, I take ‘enclosure’ to have been the primary meaning, with specialization as ‘enclosure for cows and horses’ > ‘pen, corral’.

This, then, allows us to compare Hittite *ḫa-a-li* ‘pen, corral (for cows and horses)’ with the following Germanic forms: Gothic *alhs* ‘temple’; Old English *ealh* ‘temple’; Old Saxon *alah* ‘temple’. According to Feist (1939:36—37), the original meaning here was ‘a protected, holy grove’, as noted by Tacitus *lucos ac nemora consecrant* ‘[the Germanic peoples] consecrate woods and groves’ (cf. also Lehmann 1986:27), in other words, all from Proto-Germanic **al-χa-z* ‘enclosed, sacred place’ (cf. Kroonen 2013:22 — Kroonen notes that “[t]he link with **h$_2$lek-* ‘to ward off, to defend’ … is arbitrary”; Orël 2003:14), comparable to Lithuanian *alkas*, *alkà* ‘holy grove on a hill’ (that is, ‘place on a hill where sacrifices are made’) (cf. Derksen 2015:49—50; Smoczyński 2007.I:11; Fraenkel 1962—1965.I:7), and further, probably to Greek ἄλσος (< *ἄλτι̯ος) ‘sacred grove’, ἄλμα ‘(sacred) grove’ (cf. Beekes 2010.1:73 and 75; Chantraine 1968—1980:65 [etymology “obscure”]; Frisk 1970—1973.I:79 [etymology “uncertain”]).

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We can now summarize our findings: We can reconstruct an original Proto-Indo-European nominal stem **H₂ə́l-* (**H₂él-*) ‘enclosed space’, with the following derivatives:

1. In Hittite, the meaning became specialized as ‘enclosed space in which to keep cows and horses’ > ‘pen, corral’.
2. In Germanic and Baltic, **H₂ə́l-* (**H₂él-*) was extended by **-kʰ-* (**-k-*), that is, **H₂ə́l-kʰ-* (**H₂él-k-*), and the meaning became specialized as ‘enclosed, sacred space’: Proto-Germanic **al-χa-z* ‘enclosed, sacred space’ > ‘temple’; Proto-Baltic **al-ka-s* ‘sacred space on a hill’.
3. In Greek, **H₂ə́l-* (**H₂él-*) was extended by **-m-*, on the one hand (ἄλμα ‘[sacred] grove’), and by **-ti̯-* (ἄλσος ‘sacred grove’), on the other hand.

The original meaning was best preserved in Hittite, though narrowed somewhat to refer to an enclosure for cows and horses. However, after the separation of the Anatolian daughter languages from the main speech community, the derivatives of **H₂ə́l-* (**H₂él-*) in the non-Anatolian daughter languages came to refer specifically to an enclosed, sacred space. ■

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